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SIR CHARLES DILKE

AT

NEWCASTLE.

PRICE 1D.

*At a densely crowded Public Meeting held at
Newcastle-upon-Tyne, upon the 6th November,
1871, MR. JOSEPH COWEN, JUN., in the chair,
SIR CHARLES DILKE, M.P., delivered the
following Address.*

I am announced, I see, to speak to-night on "Representation and Royalty," and if I say more of Royalty than I do of Representation, it will be for two good reasons. The one is, that I believe that many of you have seen a report of a speech I delivered the other day, at Manchester, upon Representation, and that you know something of my views upon that subject. The other is, that I hear that you are exercised in your minds about Royalty, and want to compare notes with me upon that serious subject. As to representation, I intend next session to ask the House of Commons to declare that an attempt ought to be made, and made soon, to give equal weight

to the votes of electors in whatever part of the country they reside, and that the scandal of 13,000 electors in Newcastle (and 40,000 in Hackney) having only 2 members, while 136 in Portarlington have a member to themselves, should cease. I showed that divisions often took place when the minority represented more voters than the majority. I showed that in the division upon the election expenses, we who voted with Government, and were beaten by 96, represented nevertheless more voters than the majority, who voted for excluding poor men from Parliament. I showed, too, that certain tiny minorities, when examined from this point of view, often reveal the fact that, although very few in number, the members who voted in them represented all the populous and intelligent towns. The vote against the annuity to Prince Arthur is one of those which show a far greater real support when examined in this way than when counted roughly by the number of members; and this is indeed so markedly the case that I may be perhaps excused if I wander somewhat into a defence of those who took that course. The 53 who voted with Mr. Dixon for reduction represented 766,000 voters, and the 11 who voted root and branch against having these grants at all were mostly members for large towns. It has been attempted to show that the question was one not worth

raising, and as it has even been put by some, one which it was shabby to raise. The first statement rests upon the belief that the whole cost of the Royal Family is £385,000 a-year, and the second upon an idea that there was an arrangement at the beginning of the reign, by which such annuities and dowries as have been lately applied for should fall upon the Consolidated Fund. Now, as I believe both these statements to be erroneous, but as both the ideas are, at the same time, widely spread, it would not be altogether out of place if I were to show that those who in the large constituencies objected to this grant seem to have had strong arguments on their side. In the first place, let us consider what in this country Royalty may be supposed to cost; and, when we have done that, then let us turn to the arrangement which it is believed was made and by which we are said to be morally bound. We have first to deal with the sum of £372,000 a-year expended upon the Privy Purse and upon the Household, to which I add the Royal Bounty and Royal Alms, which amount to £13,000, making up the sum to £385,000. We next have £131,000 of annuities of a similar kind to that which we lately had to consider; the income of the Duchy of Lancaster, £32,000; that of Cornwall, £63,000; the interest on lump sums which have been paid to the various members of

the Family still living, about £10,000—making up £621,000. Steam packets, insignia, presents (such as those given by Prince Alfred in India and Australia), pensions to Royal servants, ranger-ships of parks not borne upon the Civil List, make £7,000 more; and military and naval pay to various members of the Family, about another £20,000. The palaces, omitting Hampton Court, which is a public show-place, are £47,000 more. I speak now only of the yearly charge on us, but sometimes sums which should by rights have come to the nation have been swallowed up in the palaces,—for instance, in 1849, £53,000 obtained by the sale of the Pavilion at Brighton was sunk in Buckingham Palace, as vast sums had previously been sunk by George IV. On Windsor Park there is a deficit in the Woods and Forests' account, and that deficit, of £12,000, about represents the cost of the keepers, game, and other royal as contrasted with public expenses in reference to the park. This makes £707,000, which is the end of the figures that are of a certain and very tangible character. Beyond this, we have two large sums, as to one of which we can be fairly accurate; as to the other of which we can give nothing but a guess. The first of them is the cost of the Guards. It would be totally unfair to set down anything like the whole cost of these regiments to the account of Royalty; because the

infantry are good troops and are available as part of the regular army. I regret that it is not in my power to say as much for the cavalry of the Guards—the Life Guards and Horse Guards, as they are called. I do not speak of the stampede of their horses when the geese sounded the alarm at Chobham, but their cumbersomeness and unsuitability to modern war were amply demonstrated in my presence on several occasions during the Hampshire campaign, and especially in the first battle, at Seale. I calculate that the cost of the Guards, over and above the cost of an equal number of the Line, including an increased expenditure caused by the expensive nature of the sites of two of their barracks, in the immediate neighbourhood of Royal palaces, would be about £100,000. I believe that it is not easy to over-rate the evil effect upon any army of the existence of privileged corps. The first act of the French Republic, after the demoralized Empire was upset—no, not *the first*—the first was the abolition of the Senate, the French House of Lords—but *the second*, was the abolition of the privileges of the Imperial Guard, and its fusion with the regular army. At Sedan they had had painful experience of the value of *corps d'élite*, and things had come to such a pass that the troops used to hiss when the *cent garde* went by. Even the Royal Warrant on promotion in the army, issued last week, con-

tains traces of the evil of which I speak. The Guards are excepted from the Warrant, and the Pages of Honour to the Queen are carefully allowed by special favour to enter the army without that examination to which less favoured mortals have to submit. You have been told that the army has been "bought back from the officers" at a cost of eight or ten millions: that purchase has been abolished: that it is of vital importance that entrance to the army should be by open competition, and then you have at once an exception made in favour of these young gentlemen, which destroys the whole moral value of your rule. The other of the sums is, as I believe, the largest of all the separate items of expenditure connected with the Royal Family, and that is the cost of the Royal yachts. We all of us have heard the stories of the harm done to the naval service at the time of the Crimean war—both actual and incidental harm of a moral nature—by the diverting of the service of men who ought to have been employed upon our war ships, to the finishing for the Queen of one of the Royal yachts, the *Victoria and Albert*, I believe. But few of us are aware of the vast expenditure which still and at all times goes on upon Royal yachts—expenditure for building, for repairs, for coals, for seamen's wages, for pensions to the late officers and seamen of

the yachts—an expenditure which at the least cannot be less than another £100,000 a-year, and which, having taken great pains to ascertain the facts, I believe very largely indeed to exceed that sum. Several able-bodied men I found employed all the year round at painting the ornamented fire buckets for these yachts. This makes the total figure £906,000, and I think that, speaking roughly, you may say that the positive and direct cost of Royalty is about a million a-year. The indirect cost, in the harm, for instance, done to the army by the privileges of the Guards, I of course cannot assess. In addition to the increase that I have mentioned, it is worth remembering that the Royal Family are the only persons in the kingdom who pay no taxes; and even those annuities which we have lately granted are expressly freed from all taxes, assessments, and charges. It is strange with regard to the Queen's income that this should be the case, seeing that Sir Robert Peel stated to the House of Commons, when about to introduce the Income Tax Bill in 1842, that Her Majesty, “prompted by those feelings of deep and affectionate interest in the welfare of her people which she had ever manifested, stated to him that if Parliament should subject all incomes to a certain charge,

it was her determination that her own income should be subjected to a similar burden."

I need hardly say that all these enormous sums of money are not well spent, and it is almost worth a few minutes' time to see in what kind of manner they do contrive to disappear. The salaries in the Royal Household, which amount to £131,000 a-year, include a vast number of totally useless officials—Chamberlains, Comptrollers, Masters of Ceremonies, Marshals of the Household, Grooms of the Robes, Lords-in-Waiting, Grooms-in-Waiting, Gentlemen Ushers, and a few persons who appear to perform services, but who ought to be paid for those services as they perform them, and not be made permanent officials with great titles of honour, such, for instance, as the Historical Painter to the Queen, Portrait Painter to the Queen, and the Lithographer-in-Ordinary. Under the Lord Steward's department, and the department of the Master of the Horse, we have such officers as the Coroner of the Household, and the Chief Equerry and Clerk Marshal, whose duties are not of a very burdensome description. Nothing is more singular than the constitution of the medical department. You would hardly credit the number of medical gentlemen who are required for the service of the Household, but I am aware that some of them are unpaid. There are three Physicians

in Ordinary, three Physicians Extraordinary, one Sergeant-Surgeon Extraordinary, two Sergeant-Surgeons, three Surgeons Extraordinary, one Physician of the Household, one Surgeon of the Household, one Surgeon-Apothecary, two Chemists of the Establishment in Ordinary, one Surgeon-Oculist, one Surgeon-Dentist, one Dentist in Ordinary, and one other Physician—or 21 in all; while the Prince of Wales has for his special benefit three Honorary Physicians, two Physicians in Ordinary, two Surgeons in Ordinary, one Surgeon Extraordinary, one Chemist in Ordinary—or 11 more, making 32 doctors in the Family. I should be almost afraid of tiring anybody who listened to me when I went over the list of strange offices of which the Household is made up—Lord High Almoner, whose duties consist, I believe, in giving away, on certain mysterious days, silver twopenny pieces, made on purpose for him at the Mint; Sub-Almoner, Hereditary Grand Almoner, Master of the Buckhounds, Clerk of the Check, Clerk of the Closet, Exons in Waiting, and last, but not least, the Hereditary Grand Falconer—the Duke of St. Albans—who might perhaps with advantage, if he is to retain his salary of £1,200 a-year, be created Hereditary Grand Pigeon Shooter in Ordinary. If we turn to the Lord Steward's department, we come at once upon a mysterious

Board of Green Cloth, as it is called, at the head of which are the Lord Steward, the Treasurer, the Comptroller of the Household, and the Master of the Household, with a perfect army of secretaries and clerks, and with special secretaries, with special offices, and with special salaries, in each of those sections of the department. In the kitchen department, we have a Chief Cook and four Master Cooks, receiving salaries of between £2000 and £3000 a-year between the five; and a host of confederates some of whom have duties that I cannot even guess at—such, for instance, as the two “Green Office” men. There are whole departments the duties of which cannot be very considerable, one would think, or, at all events, not considerable enough to warrant their being made into departments of the Household—for instance, the confectionery department and the ewer department, while the duty of table-decking employs no less than five persons, who have salaries of between £500 and £600 a-year in all. Now, I have said already that a great deal of this expenditure brings no benefit in any shape to members of the Royal Family, and that it is largely an expenditure upon mere sinecures, but at the same time the expenditure could be curtailed. No one can doubt but that the Queen might abolish these offices if she chose, and that if, as I believe, she

has no right to abolish them and take over the consequent savings to her own use, Parliamentary powers for the abolition of the offices—taking the saving to the public—would gladly be given to the Treasury and the Crown. Indeed there can be no doubt, as it seems to me, but that it is the duty of those who are the responsible ministers of the Crown to advise the Queen to abolish them; because many of the chief offices in the Household are notoriously made use of for political purposes, and those members of the Household who have seats in the House of Commons, are expected to vote against independent members, just as steadily as though they were political members of the Government. The bad tone, moreover, that is set by the retention of these ridiculous sinecures extends far beyond the limits of the Household, and does much towards continuing the political demoralization in high places which all of us deplore. To come back, however, to where we were. We have shown an expenditure of nearly a million a-year upon the Royal Family, and the question with which we started still remains—whether, in the face of so large an expenditure by the nation, it is necessary or even just to ask for more? In considering this question, we cannot, I think, put out of sight the fact that, besides the great sums which the Crown draws from Parliament, the present occupant of the throne and

her eldest son are both known to be possessed of considerable property. The Prince of Wales when he came of age received, it is said, £750,000, the accumulations of his income during his minority ; and the Queen received on one occasion a legacy of two-thirds of that amount — sums which together ought of themselves alone to produce an additional income of £50,000 a-year. Besides the Crown lands which they do not enjoy, the Royal Family are owners of private lands, which are in fact that which the Crown lands are said to be, but in fact are not—namely, the private property of the Queen, in the sense in which Belvoir Castle is the property of the Duke of Rutland. Of course, if there were a positive understanding that annuities should be granted to the sons as they came of age, and annuities and dowries to the daughters, that understanding might be held to bind those who had consented to it, although it is questionable how far, after a lapse of five-and-thirty years, it would bind those who had become the voters of the country since that time. But we deny that any such understanding can be found ; and I believe that now it is pretty much given up, and that we have heard the last of it, although Mr. Arthur Peel last week at Warwick spoke of it as a “solemn compact.” But the argument that is now relied upon is, that the Crown lands should

be set off against these grants. This is a large subject to go into, but I will state briefly my reasons for thinking it a pernicious heresy. These lands are not the lands of the King as an individual, but of the King as King—that is, they are public lands. They do not include the lands which various members of the Family or the present Queen have bought with money saved out of the votes of Parliament, or out of the revenues of the Duchies—such as Sandringham and Osborne, lands which in my opinion it is, for political reasons, most undesirable that the Royal Family should possess. The Crown lands, if ever they were private property at all, have been confiscated ten times over. If they were not confiscated at the great Rebellion and only conditionally restored at the Restoration, they were thoroughly confiscated at the time of the flight of James the Second. Hallam, in writing of the first Parliament of Charles the Second, says that, “they provided various resources,” of which one branch was the Crown Lands, which he classes with the ordinary revenues, such as Customs and Excise. The fact is, that no one who has examined the tenure of these lands can possibly come to any conclusion except that they are lands wholly within the authority and control of Parliament. If they are private lands of the Crown, and there is a contract lasting only

for the reign ; if at the end of this reign they are to be given over to the Prince of Wales, then I want to know why these annuities we are granting now are to be made perpetual. If all is true that is said by the Court about these singular arrangements, then I say that these annuities should be granted only up to a demise of the Crown and no further. If indeed all be true that has been said of late about the private character of the interest of the Crown in these lands, then I say that we should be justified in refusing to plant with oak timber any of those lands that are now in our possession ; because those trees cannot in the nature of things grow into value before the next settlement of this question comes to be made.

Those of the Crown Lands which are not used either for the public recreation or for purposes of revenue, should in some shape be charged to the Crown—for instance, many of those in London and at Windsor ; but I shrink before the difficulties of assessing their money value, and merely name the matter in order that it may be seen that I have by no means exhausted the question of expenditure.

So much as I have said up to the present time has been founded upon public documents, which are or may be in everybody's hands. But I have now to go somewhat further, and to inquire into

the credibility of statements which have lately been made, which are only partly founded upon proof, and which rest in part upon assertion. In a pamphlet which has been lately published, it is clearly shown that the Civil List was carefully allotted by Parliament to various distinct branches of expenditure, and not fixed as a compensation for any revenues that the Crown has given up, but upon a calculation, derived from the expenditure of the last reign, of the probable future amount of the salaries of the Household, and of tradesmen's bills. The Committee of the House of Commons which sat to settle the amount of the Civil List at the beginning of the reign never took into account the revenues of the Crown lands, and, indeed, never seem to have heard of the doctrine with respect to those lands which has lately been laid down by Liberal Ministers. As is shown by the pamphlet to which I refer, and shown, I know, with accuracy, the Committee considered only the actual past expenditure of former Kings, and the probable future expenditure of the present Queen. So much is a matter of fact, and capable of proof. The House of Commons went further than to fix the amount as a whole. It divided it under the various heads, and fixed the amount in each division ; and so careful was the House of Commons as to put these divisions into the schedule of the

Act. A clause in the Act lays it down that the saving in any one class at the end of the quarter cannot be carried to any other, and the powers given to the Lords of the Treasury to apply savings at the end of the year clearly contemplate only trifling variations in the expenditure from year to year, its general character for the reign having been immutably fixed by the House of Commons at the beginning of the reign itself. This, again, is a matter of fact, and capable of proof. Now, in answer to a question by Mr. Dixon, Mr. Gladstone stated, not long ago, that some of the sinecure offices in the Household had been abolished. To whom has the saving gone? Is it to the Privy Purse of the Queen? If not, where else? The amounts are not voted. They go straight, under the Act, out of the Consolidated Fund. The saving, therefore, cannot reach the public. All this again is a matter of fact. But what is only a matter of strong suspicion is of a far more serious character, because the amounts in question are much larger: that is, the saving upon menial offices and upon tradesmen's bills. The £172,000 and odd a-year, for instance, that used to be spent on tradesmen's bills when the Court kept up great splendour—how much of that is spent now, when there is no Court at all? Where does the £100,000 a year, or whatever may be the amount, saved under this head—where does that go to? Does it go to the

Queen for her private use?—that is to say, for her private saving, because the money is not and cannot be spent. And, if so, looking to the fact that the money was allotted by the House of Commons with the distinct object of maintaining that former state, has there not been a diversion of public moneys, for which the advisers of the Crown are responsible, almost amounting to a malversation? Now, that is the question which rests, not upon absolute proof, but only upon very strong suspicion; and, as it has now been stated with great ability in a pamphlet that has been widely circulated, it is about time that some investigation into the facts should take place. All that I can say is, that I have read the pamphlet with care, having already had considerable acquaintance with the subject of which it treats, and that I am able to declare that the writer has made out a *prima facie* case which requires the most careful and complete answer, if it is not to be held good; and, speaking for myself, I think that he has proved his position, that it was intended that the money allotted by the House of Commons to the Crown should be spent, and that it should not accumulate to form a private fortune for Queen Victoria as an individual. I think that he has shown that there is the strongest probability, almost amounting to a certainty, that large accumulations have taken place, and that, if so,

those accumulations, made by the connivance of the Treasury, are directly in the teeth of the Act of Parliament.

It now becomes my duty to offer to you certain remarks of a more general character, and, indeed, of more moment, as it seems to me, than those to which you have been willing to lend your attention. It is impossible to discuss this subject without referring to Mr. Disraeli's speech to the inhabitants of a village near his house, made not long ago in proposing the Queen's health. Speaking of the duties of the holder of the Crown, he said that an erroneous impression was prevalent with respect to them. He said that they were "multifarious," that they were "weighty," and that they were "unceasing." Now, we knew that they were "multifarious," and that they were "unceasing," but very few people had any idea that they were "weighty." Weighty means more than laborious. Mr. Disraeli went on the next moment to call them "laborious," and he never uses two words which mean the same thing. He explained what he meant by "weighty," and these were his most serious words: "There is not a despatch received from abroad nor one sent from this country which is not submitted to the Queen. The whole internal administration of this country greatly depends upon the sign-manual; and of our present Sovereign it may be

said that her signature has never been placed to any public document of which she did not know the purport, and of which she did not approve." Now, I call these most serious words, and I think if you consider them you will say that they are such. They divide themselves into two parts—Foreign and Home—and the statement is much stronger with regard to Home affairs than with regard to Foreign. No despatch received or sent that is not submitted to the Queen. Well, it may be, of course, that this word "submitted" means only here that the Queen is made aware of that which is spoken to the Foreign Minister by Foreign Powers, or by him to them. It may mean this, or it may mean more; but the statement with regard to Home affairs is so much stronger that I prefer to dwell on that. I will repeat the words: "The whole internal administration of the country greatly depends upon the sign-manual, and of our present Sovereign it may be said that her signature has never been placed to any public document of which she did not approve." Now, what does this mean, if it is true, but personal government? I cannot believe that it is true. I do not believe it as a fact. But here is Mr. Disraeli—a man no doubt of fine imagination, and who may perhaps unconsciously colour things in stating them—here is Mr. Disraeli saying that nothing in this country can be done without the

Queen's sign-manual, and that the Queen signs nothing she does not approve. What does the Emperor of Russia do more than that? What occurs if the Queen does not approve? You would answer that, the country being under a constitutional monarchy, the minister resigns, and that the Queen is forced by the constitution to find a minister who agrees with her before she can carry out her views; that if the late minister was backed up by the country she would be unable to do this, and that, therefore, no harm can be done. No doubt this is very true of all great matters, but how about small? When have we ever heard in modern times of a minister resigning because of the expression by the "Sovereign," to use Mr. Disraeli's favourite word, of a will adverse to his opinion? Never. Yet he tells us that the Queen never signs anything that she does not approve, and that nothing can be done without her signature. Does, then, the minister give way when she does not approve? and are things left undone that would otherwise have been done, and things altered that are done, because of the personal will of the monarch? Or, are we to accept the opposite alternative, that, whatever minister is in office—Conservative, Whig, or Radical—the Queen's political conscience is of such a nature as to admit of her fully approving of everything that he does? For the life of me, I cannot con-

ceive what Mr. Disraeli means. If we adopt the latter alternative, it is one little flattering to the intelligence of the Sovereign whose character Mr. Disraeli has described ; and, if we adopt the former, it affords us a view of constitutional monarchy in which it is impossible to distinguish it from the autocracy that all of us condemn.

Let us consider, again, how greatly Mr. Disraeli's theory of our administrative system, if we are to accept it as a correct one, increases that waste of time and labour which arises from the circumstance that Her Majesty, neglecting the Palaces which are maintained for her at the public cost, prefers to dwell at her private residences—Osborne and Balmoral. At one or other of these distant places a member of the Government has to be constantly in attendance, and thither every despatch, however pressing, must be sent.

To return for a moment to the considerations of cost with which I began this speech ; I have shown that it is enormous, and that the expenditure is chiefly not waste but mischief. What are the two departments, for instance, over which we have not as yet succeeded in establishing a sound parliamentary control ? The army for one, and the woods and forests for another. In both of these cases the influence at work which has hitherto proved too strong for the House of Commons is that of the Court. In the latter instance,

we stand still with folded hands before the profligate waste at Windsor; and speechless in the face of the Minister's declaration of adherence to opinions which were obsolete in the times of the Stuarts. In the former—that of the army—we have a Royal Duke, not necessarily the fittest man, at the head of it by right of birth, and the Prince of Wales, who would never be allowed a command in time of war, put to lead the cavalry division in the autumn manœuvres, thus robbing working officers of the position and of the training which they had a title to expect.

Now, institutions are not good or bad in themselves, so much as good or bad when judged by their working, and we are told that a limited monarchy works well. I set aside, in this speech, the question of whether in this country a republic would work better; but I confess freely that I doubt whether, if the charges to which I have to-night alluded are well founded, the monarchy should not set its house in order. There is a wide-spread belief that a republic here is only a matter of education and of time. It is said that some day a commonwealth will be our government. Now, history and experience show that you cannot have a republic without you possess at the same time the republican virtues; but you answer, Have we not public spirit? have we not the practice of self-government? are not we gain-

ing general education? Well, if you can show me a fair chance that a republic here will be free from the political corruption that hangs about the monarchy, I say, for my part—and I believe that the middle classes in general will say—let it come.

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